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Cutting dated 11 8 NOV 1970 19

FREE PRISONERS IN IRAQ - GOLLAN

A strong protest at the continued detention of political prisoners was sent to the Iraq President Hassan al-Bakr by Communist Party general secretary John Gollan yesterday.

He demanded the release of Kadhum Al-Jassim, Aziz Hamid, Majid al-Abriachi, Abulilah al-Nasrawi, Maskour Matrood, Karim Hawas and others if they are still alive.

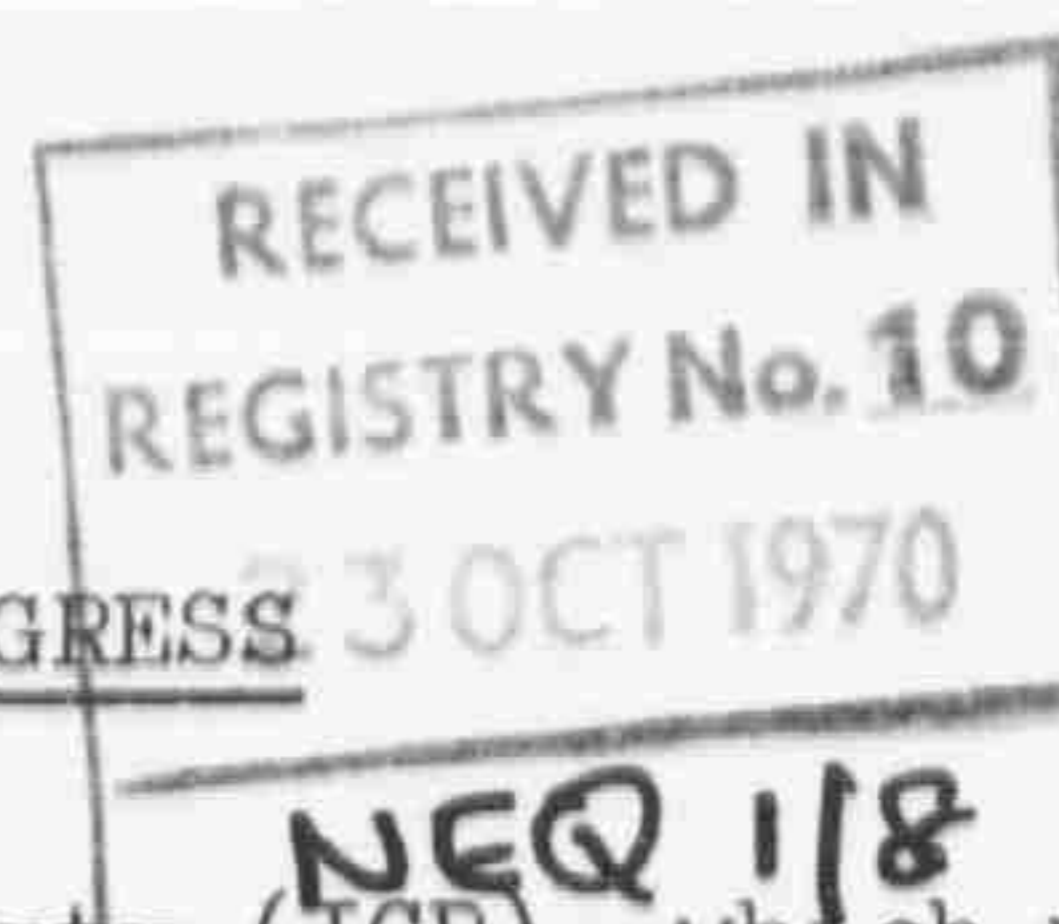
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Interview

Reg 100

Communist party
in Iraq file.

LAST PAPER

OCTOBER
1970

(4)

IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY'S SECOND CONGRESS

The Second Congress of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which was held in Iraq during September, according to Moscow Radio's Arabic Service on September 26, adopted a new programme for the party. It also praised "anti-imperialist" measures by the Ba'athist government, as well as its laws on agrarian reform and social security, but pointed to "serious defects" in its policies which, it claimed, were being exploited by "imperialists and local reactionaries".

The chief of these defects was the Ba'ath Party's failure to agree with the ICP on the question of forming a "national front" government. This, the ICP alleged, had led to a delay in implementing the agreement with the Kurds and to "acts of violence against the Iraqi democrats, including the Communists". The ICP called on the government to convene "a general national congress of all national parties and national blocs" to debate the question.

Both because of proposals for the "national front", and because of the ICP's internal divisions, caused by what the Congress described as "reckless leftists and other trends harming the party", the meeting comes at a crucial time for the Iraqi Communist movement. At no time during the past ten years have its prospects for active participation in Iraqi politics seemed so good, but this situation means that the ICP must avoid tactical mistakes that would send it back to the wilderness, especially as the party tends to fall apart under stress. Moreover, the improvement in the status of Iraqi Communists since the Ba'ath took power in July, 1968, has brought the ICP into the open, exposing its leadership and cadres.

The Second ICP Congress was expected to take place a year ago, in July/August, 1969. Announcing this on July 3 that year, the Beirut newspaper, As-Sayyad, pointed out that the First Congress had been held 25 years ago, and that "the infrequency of such meetings provided the opportunity to impose specific leaders on top of the party". Its first acknowledged leader, whose position was confirmed in 1945, was its most outstanding personality, Yusuf Salman Yusuf ("Fahd"). He took charge after his return from Europe in 1939 and led the party until his arrest and execution in 1949. "Fahd's" charter, adopted at the First Congress, provided the ICP with an outline policy, but despite this achievement, his personal conflicts with other leading Communists in Iraq were to cause divisions in the ICP after his death.

Like the First Congress, the September meeting may also have resulted from uncertainty about the party leadership and been aimed at consolidating the position of the First Secretary of the Central Committee, Aziz Muhammed, who was re-elected to that post. As if to confirm Muhammed's supremacy in the party, Pravda and Moscow Radio made no mention of other ICP personalities attending the congress.

Aziz Muhammed, who is of Kurdish origin and is aged about 45, has until now been little known, often hiding behind his party name "Nadhim Ali". He first emerged during the difficult period following the February, 1963, Ba'athist coup, when many Iraqi Communists were imprisoned or forced into exile, and some, like the then Secretary-General, Hussein al-Radi ("Salim Adil"), were executed. Muhammed was elected First Secretary following an ICP Central Committee plenum in August, 1964, and as "Nadhim Ali" led ICP delegations the following year to India, the Soviet Union, East Germany and Mongolia. His identity was revealed in June, 1965, when Iraqi security forces uncovered an ICP cell in Mosul and arrested members of the group.

Although nominally leader of the party, Muhammed was abroad at the time of the July, 1968, Ba'athist revolution in Iraq. When conditions began to improve for the Communists, the pro-Moscow faction of the party appeared to be led by Bahaeddin Nuri and Amer Abdullah, both of whom had remained and been imprisoned in Iraq. Muhammed probably returned to Iraq in late 1968 or early 1969: in September, 1969, Saddam Hussein al-Takriti, the Iraqi Vice-President, told a Tass correspondent that in June of that year, "during the World Communist Conference [held in Moscow], leaders of the Iraqi Communist Party went abroad on official passports for the first time in years".

At the World Communist Conference, Muhammed, leading the ICP delegation, confirmed both his hopes for a national front in Iraq and his unquestioning loyalty to the Soviet line. Condemning the Chinese leader, Mao Tse-tung, he said that "solidarity with the Soviet Union and the Soviet party are the test of the internationalism of every party and Socialist State".

The chief obstacle to the national front seemed at this time to be the continuing conflict between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdish minority in North Iraq. As a Kurd, Muhammed must have felt deeply about this, and ICP policy had always been to support the demands of the Kurdish Democratic Party led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani. When an agreement was reached in March, 1970, between Barzani and the government, Muhammed at once cabled President Bakr, on behalf of the ICP Central Committee, congratulating him on the cease-fire and expressing the party's full support for the agreement.

However, the murder of Muhammed al-Khudayri, a leading Communist, soon afterwards, and ICP allegations of Ba'athist responsibility for this and persecution of "progressives", led to increasing difficulties in the discussions on the national front. Instead of remaining in Iraq to lead the negotiations, Muhammed went to Moscow in April for the Lenin centenary celebrations, and then took his ICP delegation on visits to Bulgaria and Romania in May. So uncertain was the ICP leadership at this time, that details of the party's Central Committee published in the Beirut Press did not even mention Muhammed's name, while the Beirut newspaper, Al-Kifah, on May 12 said that Amer Abdullah, Dr. Rahim Ajina and Makram Talabani were leading the party in the negotiations with the Ba'ath.

Muhammed may have sensed that negotiations were breaking down, and have chosen deliberately to remain outside Iraq at this time. In July there were rumours that an attempted ICP coup against the government had been foiled, and in the same month there were bitter attacks on the ICP in the Iraqi Press and on Baghdad Radio, which said on July 9 that the Communists "are not worthy of leadership" and "have failed to make their political attitudes and behaviour consistent with their ideological concepts and principles". The radio added that the basis of a national front would be an alliance of the Ba'ath with the Kurdish Democratic Party.

It has been suggested that the Soviet Union is putting pressure on the Ba'ath in support of Muhammed's efforts to bring Communists into the Iraqi Government. But Muhammed still has to assert his personality in the Iraqi Communist movement and attempt a reconciliation with rival factions if he is not to remain a shadowy and insignificant figure in Iraqi politics. His

Cutting dated 24 JUN 1970 19

Arab Communists say 600 arrested

By ERIC DOWNTON in Beirut

MASS arrests of Communists by the Baath régimes of Iraq and Syria are alleged by Communist sources in Beirut. Party spokesmen said yesterday that 400 had been jailed in Syria and about 200 in Iraq.

These figures should probably be taken with considerable reserve, although there have been indirect admissions both in Syria and Iraq that some Communists have been arrested.

Iraqi authorities recently accused a group of Communists in Baghdad of stockpiling arms, possibly for use in an attempt to assassinate members of the Government.

Ideological rivals

As the Baath régimes in Damascus and Baghdad are bitter ideological rivals, any moves against Communists in the two countries are probably coincidental.

Moscow has reacted in a minor key to anti-Communist moves on the domestic front by various Arab leaders, including President Nasser.

A Syrian Communist magazine *Nida al Shaab* ("The People Call") reported that a leading Syrian party official was recently kidnapped, tortured to death and his body sent to his family in a crude coffin.

The magazine said a number of regional officials were being tortured in prison.

Although nominally banned in Syria and Iraq, the Communist parties in both countries have been taking an open political role during the past year. A Communist is a member of the Syrian Government.

Beirut reports say fuel was added to the Syrian anti-Communist campaign when the Interior Minister, Mohammed Rabah

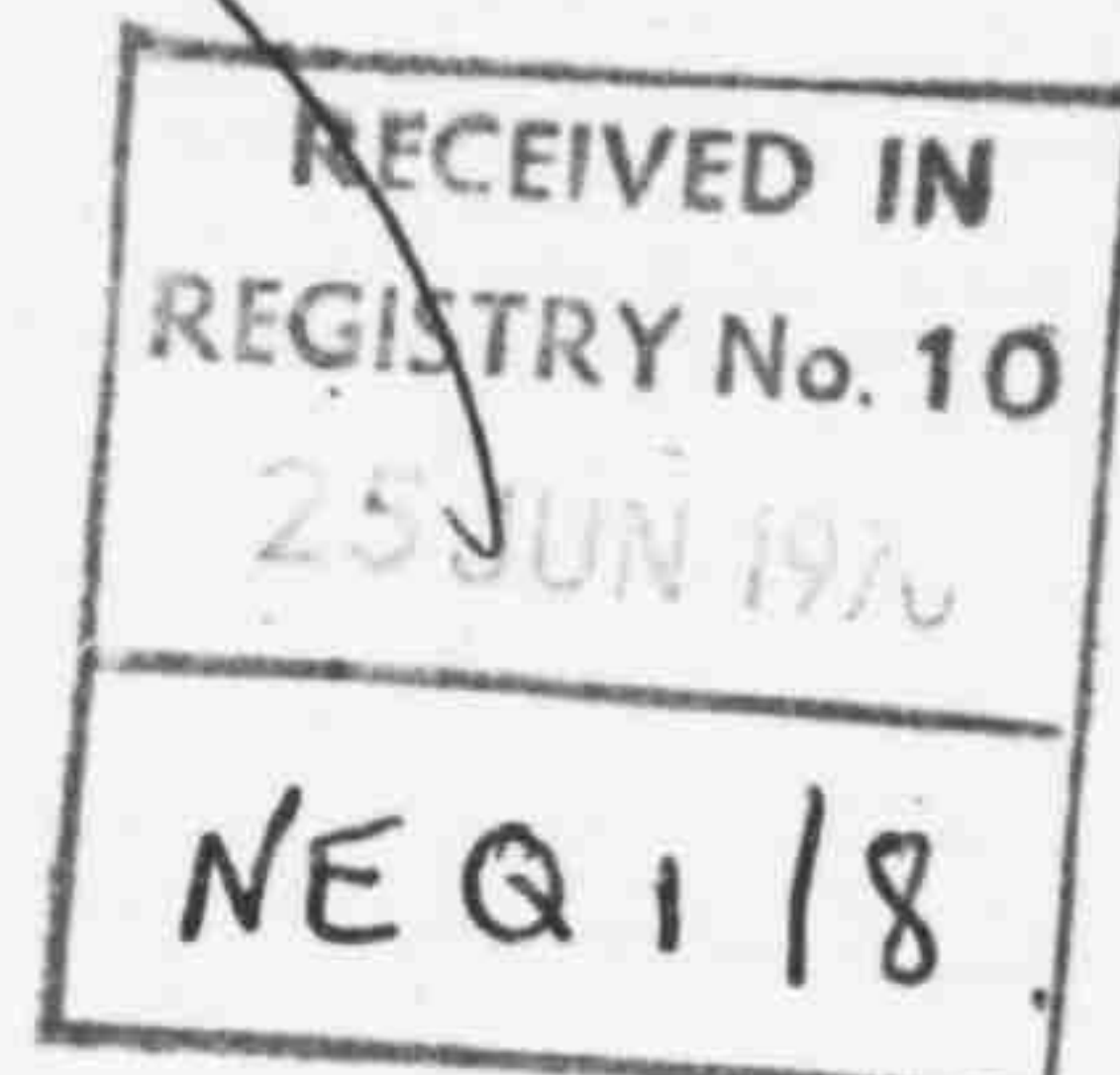
Tawil, angrily left Moscow during ceremonies marking the centenary of Lenin's birth in April, declaring that he had been snubbed by the Russians at a public ceremony.

Torture allegation

The Iraqi Communist party recently sent a message of protest to the Government alleging "terrorism, torture and assassination."

The party accused the secret police of complicity in the alleged murder in March of Mohammed Ahmed al Khodari, a member of the party's Baghdad central committee.

It alleged that the police and Baathist supporters attacked Communists during a political rally, tearing down banners and injuring demonstrators.



M. Hucheliff

Mr H. Hucheliff

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MR GORDON KING

U.S. EMBASSY under C.S.

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BRITISH EMBASSY,

BAGHDAD.

23 May 1970

Mr Gordon King.

a "national front" in Baghdad

or here.

P.R. M. Hinchcliffe

The Iraqi Communist Parties and
the Ba'ath

RECEIVED IN
REGISTRY No. 10

3 JUN 1970

NEQ 1/8

In my letter 2/1 of 25 April I mentioned briefly allegations in the Beirut press of the murder by the Ba'athists of a leading Iraqi communist and the arrest of a number of other communists; we had heard similar rumours here, particularly over the period of the Lenin Centenary celebrations.

2. It appears in fact that the Ba'ath have fallen out with both the pro-Moscow Central Committee of the Communist Party and the breakaway so-called Central Leadership of the Party under Aziz Al-Haj. Some indication of this quarrel has now appeared in the Iraqi press, but as you will have seen from the Arab World the argument has only been fully ventilated in the Beirut press in an argument between the pro-Iraqi Beirut newspaper Al-Kifah and the Communist daily Al-Nida and weekly Al-Akhbar. The dispute with the Central Committee of the Party centres around firstly the murder of the Iraqi communist Ahmad al-Khodari. The Central Committee issued a statement published in Beirut accusing the régime of having committed this murder. The reaction from the pro-Iraqi al-Kifah was firstly to deny the charge and then announce the setting up of an investigating body under the chairmanship of Makram Talabani who was said to be a member of the Central Committee. This dispute still remains in an utter fog following a denial by Talabani that he is a member of the Central Committee or that he was ever appointed to head the investigating body. Possibly this body like many other Ba'athi organisations was a figment of their imagination designed to solve the problem of the moment. But we need not rule out the possibility that Khodari was in fact murdered by Ba'athist elements. The second quarrel concerns the wave of arrests which I mentioned earlier. According to the Beirut communist weekly Al-Akhbar this wave of arrests started on 25 March. The Iraqis through Al-Kifah again deny this charge. They specify two instances in which communists have been arrested; in the first case following the discovery of a cache of arms in the possession of a Central Committee cell in Baghdad, leaders of the Central Committee were called upon to explain themselves which they did by saying that the cache dated back to 1965 and had been overlooked. The Ba'ath reportedly gave them a wiggling and released them. The second instance was the arrest of a group of eight PDF commandos who were arrested for distributing "unauthorised" leaflets in the name of a so-called "Revolutionary Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party". We cannot identify this organisation which is probably one of a number of splinter parties which are small and of little significance. Further stocks of these leaflets were apparently

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found in PDF headquarters but after interrogation this group also was released. These allegations have been taken up by the Syrians, publicly at a May Day rally in Damascus and also in the Beirut pro-Syrian daily Al-Rayah. This is of course not surprising as Syrian accusations that the Iraqi Ba'ath were persecuting "progressive" elements have been a mainstay of the Syrians' propaganda war against the Iraqi Ba'ath for over a year now.

3. As said earlier, this particular campaign has scarcely appeared in the Iraqi press. Al-Thawra denied in general that there had been any arrests of progressive elements in its article of 11 April (see my letter 1/9 of 17 April). This article and other party statements on similar themes have criticised the unwillingness of other political elements in Iraq to cooperate with the Ba'ath. This refers in the main to the communists as the most important political group in Iraq after the Ba'ath and the KDP, but there is no doubt that it refers to other political parties also. It is known that leaders of the Iraqi Arab Socialist Movement, the Independent Democrats, and the National Democratic Party have been in correspondence with President Bakr on the question of participation in a National Front Government and as I reported in my letter 1/11 of 23 May Saddam Hussein has indicated that the Ba'ath have not found their attitude satisfactory. There is also the arrest reported in the Beirut press of a group under the title "The Congress of Socialist Nationalists" headed by one Said Thabet after the discovery of a cache of arms equipped with silencers. Saddam Hussein in his television speech of 13 May although he did not specify individual groups when speaking on the topic of cooperation with other political bodies, seems to have dealt only partially with the communists. He did not touch upon the alleged murder of Al-Khodari but he denied reports of mass arrests of communists and repeated the Al-Kifah version of the arrest of the communists found with a cache of arms.

4. The dispute with the Central Leadership of the communists however has been openly vented here with Al-Thawra of 4 May taking the unusual step of publishing a statement issued by the Central Leadership which accused the régime of arresting communists and of the murder of Al-Khodari. It also attacked the Central Committee of the party both for its hostility to the Central Leadership and for its opposition to the principle of "armed struggle" which according to the Central Leadership is a tenet of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. By far the greater part of the statement however was taken up with an attack on the Ba'ath régime for reaching a settlement with the Kurds. This settlement, the statement says, was reached without consulting any other political organisations apart from the KDP. The agreement did not express ambitions of the Kurdish people and therefore would remain no more than ink on paper. The announcement of the settlement was not a progressive step. it was merely a retreat before the threat of armed revolution. Al Thawra prints its reply beside the text of this statement. It concentrates largely on the Central

/Leadership's

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Leadership's criticism of the Kurdish settlement which it claims did express the will of both the Arab and Kurdish peoples. This perhaps explains why the newspaper should have taken the unusual step of printing an anti-Ba'ath statement. It clearly feels it has a very strong ground in defending the Kurdish agreement and indeed it seems odd that the Central Leadership could have imagined it would profit from this particular line of attack.

5. The dispute with the Central Leadership of the party is not surprising. After Aziz al-Haj's television appearance in April 1969 there appeared to be a reconciliation between the Ba'ath and the Central Leadership, and Aziz al-Haj was reportedly released. However, following the appointment of Aziz Sharif as Minister of Justice and the successful negotiation of the Kurdish settlement, relations with the Central Committee of the Communist Party improved and the Central Leadership would now seem to be out of favour. The dispute with the Central Committee is thus the more surprising. It seems certain that there is a dispute over the conditions, in terms of policy, for cooperation between the two in a National Front. In this the Communist Party is not alone among Iraqi political organisations in standing out against the Ba'athi demands for overall policy control. Saddam Hussein in his television speech, however, made a distinction between disagreements on policy which the Ba'ath is willing to tolerate, and armed attempts to overthrow the government. If therefore, we accept the Ba'athi version of the arrest of Central Committee members this would seem to be an isolated incident, for which the communists were as much to blame, rather than a wider Ba'athi campaign against the communists whose subsequent release would seem to support this. If this is true we might expect that despite these set backs the dialogue between the Ba'ath and the Central Committee will continue, though perhaps not with any greater chance than in the past of achieving genuine cooperation in a National Front.

Jm

Mike

(M. K. Jenner)

c.c. Chancery,
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Dear Peter,

BAGHDAD
RECEIVED IN
REGISTRY No. 10
- 1 MAY 1970
NEQ 1/8

25 April 1970.

Lenin Centenary Celebrations in Iraq

A week of celebrations to mark the centenary of Lenin's birth began in Baghdad on 18 April with a large rally at Al Khuld Hall attended among others by Dr. Elias Farah, from the National Command of the Ba'ath Party, Salah Omar al Ali, from the Regional Command of the Ba'ath Party, and a number of Ministers and members of the Iraq/Soviet Friendship Society. Other events included a reception given by the Soviet Ambassador on 22 April, an exhibition of books about Lenin in the Baghdad University Library, an exhibition of Soviet Oriental Art, a Lenin Festival of Films and an exhibition of photographs entitled Lenin 1870-1970. All this, taken with considerable press coverage of the centenary and many thousands of words extolling Lenin the Revolutionary and the Soviet Union as a supporter of the Arab cause, have made the centenary celebrations an impressive event.

2. However, towards the end of the week the Ba'ath Party, which had throughout been closely associated with the celebrations, felt it necessary to publish a long article in the Party newspaper Al Thawra in reply to "reactionary" criticism that the celebrations demonstrated that the Ba'ath Party was now fully committed to communism. The article opened by saying that the Arab Revolution had a character of its own. It reviewed the development of the Soviet Revolution, putting particular emphasis on its peasant basis. The Ba'ath Party it said, had benefited greatly from this Soviet experiment, but the Arab Revolution was not a mere lifeless imitation of the Soviet revolution; here the Ba'ath Party differed both with the "traditional left" which saw revolution throughout the world as an organic whole and assumed itself to be the only heir to the accomplishments of the revolutionary ideology - "an assumption which smacked of idealism and crudity" - and also needless to say with "the right" which denied the human basis of revolution. It was according to Al-Thawra, the right which had accused the Ba'ath Party of throwing in its lot with /the

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the communist camp. But the Ba'ath Party as revolutionaries have honoured Lenin for his humanity and because he was the true political struggler in the cause of the working class, opposing imperialism and exploitation and exposing the evils of zionism. Thus the party could honour Lenin while recognising the ideological differences between them. Such differences arising from differences in conditions and circumstances should not be allowed to minimise the links between the Ba'ath Party and communism. The article concluded by saying that the Ba'ath have consistently and irrevocably rejected anti-communism and looked upon communism as one of the progressive elements opposed to zionism and world imperialism. It would therefore be naive for the party to remain neutral between the opposing camps of communism and imperialism.

3. The Russians may be forgiven for feeling that this article has somewhat dampened the effects of the centenary celebrations. Admittedly it is uncritical of Soviet communism, and its criticism of Iraqi communism, if that is the way we are to interpret the phrase "traditional left", is merely made in passing. However, such a deliberate and specific disassociation from communist doctrine at this stage must be significant. It is, I think, the most detailed public statement we have had since the Ba'ath came to power in Iraq of what they consider their relations with communism to be. It shows that the Ba'ath are aware of the dangers of their increasing dependence on communist countries, particularly the Soviet Union, and demonstrates at least a determination that, as far as Iraq is concerned, communism as a doctrine should keep its place. At least the tightrope-walker has now publicly declared himself to be on a tightrope. This possibly gives him a better chance of not falling off.

4. Accusations in the Beirut Communist papers shortly before the centenary of the murder of a leading Iraqi communist by the Iraqi regime and the arrest (of which we have some confirmatory evidence) of numbers of others have naturally aroused interest. If the accusations are true, the timing of their flurry of harassment is odd. It may of course be simply part of the regime's continuing process of keeping the local communists on the hop, which the authorities had forgotten to call temporarily off or had decided to let continue. One suspects a Syrian hand in arranging the publicity. But what the Russians think about it, we have not been able to learn.

Yann
M. K. Jenner
(M.K. Jenner)

Copied to P. Joy Esq.,
Beirut.

Chancery,
Moscow.

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Details Of Activities Of Iraqi Communist Party And Its Relations With Ba'athists. Communism In Iraq. 25 Apr. 1970. MS Middle East Online: Iraq, 1914-1974: Selected files from series AIR, CAB, CO, FCO, FO, PREM, T, WO, The National Archives, Kew, UK FCO 17/1241. Newspaper Cutting. The National Archives (Kew, United Kingdom). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com/apps/doc/SC5107461244/GDSC?u=webdemo&sid=bookmark-GDSC&xid=abf18dbc&pg=1. Accessed 11 Apr. 2022.